



Helicopters Safety



INTRODUCTION

Helicopters are a critical tool in many oil spill response operations; however, they are also very expensive and dangerous. The danger exists because people do not understand the potential hazards that are inherent on or near the helicopter. The purpose of this safety alert is to give you a basic understanding of where the potential dangers exist, and how to work around helicopters safely and effectively. Knowing the proper protocols and safety precautions prior to boarding a helicopter is required.

Above all else the number one rule is to obey the pilot at all times and to stay alert in and around the operational area of a helicopter. If in doubt, ask your pilot. The pilot will provide clear and concise instructions to ensure a safe flight.

CONTRIBUTE TO A SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT

If you are requesting helicopter assistance, at a minimum pilots want to know the following:

- The flight mission and the flight plan. Remember to be reasonable with your requests.
- Coordinate the mission/purpose with any other passengers.
- Approximate wind speed and direction of the wind at the landing site(s).
- Air temperature in the summertime (heat effects thickness of the air and therefore affects lift capacity).
- Suitability of landing zones in the area.
- Obstacles in the area of the landing zone (type, height, location, etc.).
- Type of terrain in the landing zone (sand, snow, rocks, trees, swampy, bushy, etc.).
- Slope of the landing zone (much over ten degrees is cause for concern).



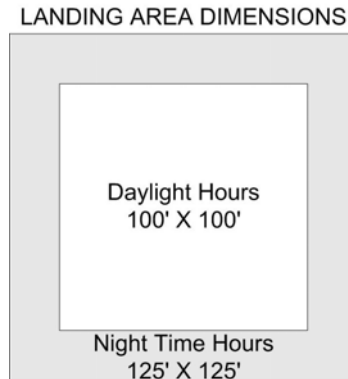
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HELICOPTER LANDING AREA

At a minimum, the touchdown zone should be as follows:

- During daylight hours - 100' X 100' square
- At night - 125' X 125' square



- The surface should be flat and firm, and free from debris that might blow up into the rotor system.

AS A PASSENGER YOU WILL BE EXPECTED TO KNOW:

- What is expected of you on the flight
- How to embark and disembark
- In-flight and ground procedures
- Location and use of safety and survival equipment
- Emergency procedures

ON THE GROUND PREPARATION AND CONDUCT:

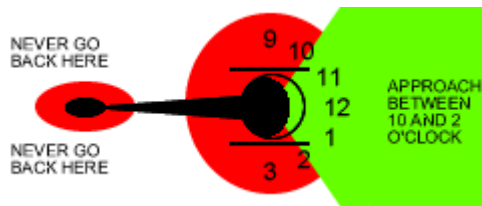
- Conduct/Request a tail-gate safety briefing. Every helicopter is different.
- Discuss and predetermine the seating arrangements prior to boarding. Make sure the primary observers have seats optimal for viewing
- Dress for the weather
- Do not smoke within 100 feet of a helicopter and 500 feet of a fuel truck.
- Stay *well to the side* of the helipad when the helicopter is arriving or departing
- Secure your clothing, equipment, and headgear against rotor winds.
- Protect your eyes against blown dust and particles, use eye protection if available
- Secure adequate hearing protection.
- Keep the helipad clear
- Always stay clear of the helicopter's main and tail rotors, especially when the aircraft has landed on a slope. Always obtain eye contact with the pilot when attempting to approach. Pointing first to yourself then to the helicopter indicates you want to approach the craft. **DO NOT APPROACH UNTIL YOU GET THE PILOT'S OK.** A good rule of thumb is to approach from the pilot's 10 O'clock to 2 O'clock position.



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Helicopter Approach Zones:



- If you can, wait until the rotors stop turning
- Never touch a helicopter without the specific permission of a crew member. Helicopters require expensive maintenance with very costly parts
- Approach and leave by the *down slope* side - for rotor clearance



- Carry gear firmly at your *side*, never over your shoulder or above your head



- Never throw items toward or out of helicopters
- Load cargo carefully and secure it against movement
- Ensure baggage compartment doors are properly closed and latched
- At the first sign of trouble on the ground, always HIT THE DECK—a helicopter that is coming apart throws metal in every direction.

IN THE HELICOPTER

- Secure seatbelts (and shoulder straps, if provided) while in flight
- USCG requires passengers to wear clothing made of nomex, a man made fiber resistant to heat, flame and chemicals
- Flight Helmets and approved floatation device are required in USCG helicopters
- Remain in your seat unless given permission to move
- Do not distract the pilot during takeoff, maneuvering or landing
- Read instructions on the operation of doors, emergency exits, and the location of the ELT (emergency locator transmitter) and emergency equipment



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- The pilot has the final say in any situation involving the safety of the crew, passengers, aircraft or any aspect involving the helicopter's operation

DURING AN EMERGENCY

- Follow instructions
- Do not distract the pilot
- Check that any loose gear in the cabin is secured
- Wear helmet if provided
- Remove eye glasses and put into your pocket (you might need them later)
- Assume brace position
 - tighten seatbelt
 - *with* shoulder straps, tighten and sit upright, knees together, arms folded across chest
 - *without* shoulder straps, bend forward so chest is on your lap, head on knees, arms folded under thighs

AFTER AN EMERGENCY LANDING

- Wait for instructions to exit, or until rotor stops turning
- Assist others to evacuate well clear of the aircraft
- Remove first aid kit and other emergency equipment after no threat of fire
- Administer first aid if required
- Remove ELT, read instructions and activate
- Set up camp to be as comfortable as possible
- Make the site as conspicuous as possible from the air
- Stay near the aircraft - don't wander away from the site

WHEN FLYING OVER WATER

- Listen carefully to the pilot's over water pre-flight briefing
- Wear a lifejacket and/or immersion suit
- Know seatbelt fastening, tightening, releasing procedures
- Know the location and operation of doors and emergency exits
- Know the location and operation of the ELT
- During an emergency
 - obey the pilot's ditching instructions
 - assume brace position when advised by the pilot
 - Wait for instructions to exit, or until rotor stops turning
- After a ditching
 - establish a reference position
 - release seat belt
 - inflate lifejacket and life raft when clear of helicopter